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RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE  
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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ITANBUL 3256  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: MINI-DUBLIN GROUP MEETS IN ASHGABAT

¶1. (SBU) At a March 13 meeting in Ashgabat of Mini-Dublin Group members organized by the Italian Embassy in Moscow, representatives of the U.S., French, UK, Polish, Romanian, Turkish, Japanese and Russian embassies exchanged views with two officials of the State Counter-Narcotics Service (SCNS) on a variety of drug-related issues relevant to Turkmenistan.

The SCNS was represented by Deputy Director, Muhamed Orazov, and International Relations Department Chief, Aman Muhamedkuliyeu, who gave lengthy presentations on Turkmenistan's counter-narcotics program to date, as well as their agency's "dual approach" to combating drugs, both by confronting supply channels and providing rehabilitation services for addicts. The session was also attended by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) representative for Turkmenistan, who in turn provided an overview of that agency's projects in the country.

SEIZURE STATISTICS STILL SPARSE

¶2. (SBU) Although the SCNS has yet to provide narcotics seizure statistics for all of 2008, Orazov noted that the total seizures for 2007 amounted to 3,283 kg, and said that the seizures for the first half of 2008 (996 kg) indicated a 32 percent decrease vis-a-vis the same period the year before. Several Mini-Dublin members stressed the need for the Turkmen Government to provide, in a timely fashion, more detailed figures on the country's counter-narcotics activities. UNODC shared crime statistics for the year 2006, and said that of a total of 5,341 offenses registered that year, 30 percent of them (1625) were drug-related. Mini-Dublin members also queried the SCNS representatives regarding the number of drug addicts in Turkmenistan, and were given the figure of 33,000 "registered" addicts as of the end of 2007. (NOTE: The World Health Organization recently estimated that 10 percent of the population -- i.e. at least 500,000 people -- are addicted to narcotics in Turkmenistan. END NOTE.). The UNODC representative said, in turn, that a lack of both information and intelligence sharing and organized crime investigations, as well as the presence of corruption, all continue to hamper Turkmenistan's counter-narcotics efforts.

PRIORITY NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

¶3. (SBU) Meeting participants agreed that Turkmenistan is

most in need of assistance in strengthening its border controls, strengthening control over drug precursors, and training of law enforcement officers. Mini-Dublin members reiterated their desire to receive more detailed drug-related data from the Turkmen Government. Participants also agreed to a set of non-binding recommendations, including the need to support the Turkmen Government in advancing counter-narcotics cooperation and information sharing; enhancing multilateral and bilateral cooperation in the field of drug control; donor country assistance to Turkmenistan in strengthening drug control capacities along the borders and reinforcing precursor control capacities; assistance to the Turkmen Government in developing the SCNS; donor support for Turkmenistan-Afghanistan border cooperation, and donor support for the government's drug demand reduction.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: Mini Dublin members meeting are held twice a year in Ashgabat and are a useful means of sharing strategies among donor countries. For the SCNS to participate in the gathering was unusual. Members were sometimes pointed in their remarks that it is difficult to cooperate or assist with a government that is tight-lipped about its own counter narcotics activities and reluctant to approach donors with concrete requests for assistance. END COMMENT.  
MILES